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Michele Stewart receives \$25,000 Milken National Educator Award

Stewart among up to 100 K-12 educators across the country receiving 20th Anniversary Awards

MADISON—Michele Stewart, recipient of a 2006 Milken National Educator Award, is described as someone who excites her classroom and rejuvenates long-time educators with new ideas for helping children learn.

“I’ve not seen such an excitement in reading as I have in her students,” said Colby Superintendent Terry Dowan. He said that Stewart’s ability to take a challenging fifth-grade position and turn it into a very positive experience makes her “truly exceptional.”

As a fifth-grade teacher of reading, English, language arts, science, and mathematics, Stewart has brought numerous ideas to her classroom to motivate students. She started a “Before School Reading Club” that helps struggling readers develop confidence in their reading and a more positive attitude toward school. Her “Reading Buddies” project pairs fifth-grade students with first-graders to help struggling fifth-graders develop fluency, intonation, and comprehension. Another mentoring project among fifth-graders and high-school buddy / tutors, builds younger students’ skills while boosting self-esteem in the high school students. Stewart also has worked on peer mentoring for English-language learners at the high school and elementary school levels.

Her outreach to the community includes recruiting volunteers to help children with math, spelling, and reading, and a Dr. Seuss Family Fun Night that drew 155 families for an evening of educational math, language arts, reading, physical education, and science games and activities.

Stewart’s former principal, Lea Fildes, believes teaching is Stewart’s life calling. “Teaching is who Michele Stewart is and teaching is what defines her,” she said.

Stewart earned an associate arts degree from Southwestern Community College in Creston, Iowa, and a bachelor of arts degree in elementary education with multicategorical and reading endorsements from Graceland College in Lamoni, Iowa. She began her teaching career as a kindergarten through second grade special education teacher in Afton, Iowa. She is in her third year of teaching fifth-grade in the Colby School District. Stewart will receive a \$25,000 unrestricted cash award as part of the 2006 Milken National Educator honor.

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